

Supporting Document to accompany

Full planning Application on behalf of Oasis Care Solutions NW Ltd.

Planning and Purpose

- This application and change of use will not intensify the existing use as the proposal is to create a home for one child in care. It is believed that there will be little difference in the nature of the property when compared to the residential use by a family with children. It should be noted that, although there may be a change of use in terms of planning, this does not mean that it is an unacceptable or significant material change of use, or that there would be any adverse effect on adjacent properties.
- The proposed use is as a care home for a child in need of care. There would be one child being looked after at the premises. This is a type of use that is generally accepted to be best located in the community. It is, in reality, very similar to a dwellinghouse used as a family home.

Oversight of Service

- Children's Homes in England cannot legally function without registration with Ofsted (the Regulatory Body). Registration is a rigorous process in which providers must demonstrate they are fit and proper persons to carry on the business and are financially viable to be able to meet the costs incurred by any placement. Additionally, changes to legislation introduced a requirement for Managers of existing children's homes and prospective providers to undertake a location risk assessment to ensure that premises used for the purposes of a children's home are appropriately and suitably located so that children cared for by the home are effectively safeguarded and able to access services to meet the needs identified in their care or placement plans.
- The applicant believes the location of the premises would not set the service apart or advantage/disadvantage from any neighbouring property the majority of which already accommodate families in an established cohesive community and is a testament to the suitability of the location.
- This home will have a Statement of Purpose which will identify the purpose of the home and identify how it will achieve good outcomes for children, functioning within the current Quality Standards and Children's Homes Regulations.
- Ofsted has a Regulatory and Enforcement responsibility which allows for scrutiny and oversight of the home. This includes Inspection visits, Quality Assurance Visits, and unannounced visits when concerns are raised. The home will also have a responsibility to appoint an independent person to visit the home monthly to assess care, progress, and compliance. Similarly, the home will have a responsibility to furnish Ofsted with information including self-analysis.
- The Responsible Individual Mark Kelly will have oversight of the home along with the Registered Manager.

Placement of Children

- It is our expressed preference to accommodate a child within their local authority boundary where possible. We have begun a dialogue with Lancashire County Council Children's commissioning team to build a firm and trusting relationship to become a chosen provider within Lancashire. We aim to meet the continued need for placements for Lancashire children and address the shortfall being made by other providers who are not committing to supporting children from our own authorities.
- All children considered for placement will be referred by a Local Authority.
- All referrals will be scrutinised and subject to a 360° robust impact assessment process before an offer of placement is made.

Supervision of children

- The child will not be left alone at the property.
- The child can leave the property, but staff members would have to be informed and would, as a matter of course, be made aware if the child has left the property.
- There is no curfew, and the child would be treated as they would be in a family with agreements reached between adult and child in terms of reasonable "home times". These would also be agreed with the placing authority and be an integral part of the child's care plan.
- The child would be expected to be present at mealtimes, spend time in the home, attend education, and go to bed in the normal way and at normal times.
- Home security would be as for a normal dwelling house, the needs of the child around road safety would be assessed in detail within dynamic risk assessment plans which are always under review whilst a child is placed in our care.
- CCTV would not be installed internally unless recommended as a part of the planning application. A standard home security camera for example 'Ring' may be installed on the outer part of the building to monitor the driveway only. This is for safety and security reasons only and will be in line with that of a family-dwelling house and neighbouring properties.
- Friends and relatives of the children can visit but only by prior arrangement and subject to the objectives in their care plans. The home's dedicated diary will ensure these visits take into account the number of movements throughout any one day. Consideration of movements will always be given to the local community so as not to intensify vehicle movements beyond an acceptable level of a family home.

FAQ's

What would be the needs of the children to be placed in the home e.g. Would they suffer from physical disabilities, mental health issues, established behavioural problems, or would they simply be vulnerable young people?

The children would indeed be vulnerable young people by virtue of their Looked After status. The only criteria are that they are accommodated because the Local Authority has a Corporate Parenting responsibility for them. This could come about purely because they have had to be removed from their family care, have no alternative carers, and cannot function in a foster home.

Some children may exhibit behavioural problems, but this is almost always linked to previous trauma and/or parenting issues. Removing them to a home in which they can be cared for and nurtured will play a large part in addressing any behavioural problems and in some cases prove to provide immediate relief.

Would the children attend local schools or be educated within the home?

We would endeavour to ensure our children had access to the most appropriate provision and it would never be a long-term ambition for children to be educated at home. It may well be that this is a very temporary solution whilst external provision away from the home is identified.

What about noise and the impact on the adjoining property?

We anticipate noise could potentially be less than that generated within the context of a dwelling house. For example, we would not be holding or hosting large gatherings – such as family parties etc. We would hold appropriate celebrations in the home, but they would be limited in time and numbers attending.

Our children will have agreed on home times and agreed settling down and bedtimes. Shift handovers will be at a minimum and will not take place in the early or late hours.

Would there be an excessive increase in traffic or issues around parking caused by visitors to the home or staff attending to look after the children?

Note on Vehicular Movements of Typical Residential Home for a Child in Need of Care

Introduction

This note has been produced to address a particular aspect of the operation of homes for young people in need of care. The basic model of care with which it is concerned is a small home for up to 2 children, with no more than two carers present overnight. In this case the home is for a single child in care.

The home would operate very much as it had done as a private dwelling, and those traffic movements would be very little different from the use as a dwelling.

To address this in more detail, and on an objective basis, this note has been prepared with specific reference to typical traffic generation.

Anticipated Traffic generation

1. It should be noted that the home operates with one dedicated vehicle for the property.
2. **Vehicular Movements & Staff Turnaround** – projecting normal activity through a 24hr weekday period there would be 2 main arrival and departure times for staff working in the home. Largely these would be at 0800 hrs and 2200 hrs. 2 staff members will arrive at 0800 hrs and 2 staff members will then leave following a brief handover. 1 staff member will arrive at 2200 hrs and 1 staff member will leave respectively.
When required the home manager will arrive at 0900 and depart before 1700 hrs.
3. Children would have statutory visits from their Social Worker on a 4 - 6 weekly basis. This would be anticipated to take place on a weekday and within the normal assumed range of office hours.
4. **Parking** – there is sufficient parking space on the driveway to accommodate up to 4 vehicles. These parking spaces will be accommodated for the home's dedicated vehicle and one space will remain available for the use of visitors or external professionals who are required to visit the home.
NB: External professionals; Ofsted – up to 2 visits per year / **Social Workers** – 1 visit per 6 weeks / **Regulation 44 Inspector** – 1 visit per month. The homes diary system will be monitored daily on the requirements of parking needs and parking arrangements, where practically possible will be made in advance with all visitors.
5. The need for parking will reduce at weekends when there are no professional visitors. Weekends would see a diminution in traffic arrivals and departures as the “business” aspects of the function of the home are not on-site at the weekend
6. Children under our care will not have access to their own vehicles.

Conclusion

For the above reasons, the applicant considers that this additional data, applying to vehicular movements, addresses one of the potential key areas of concern in terms of impact on the neighbours. Increased parking needs will only be generated during office/working hours where neighbouring residents will unlikely be affected due to their own working commitments and being out of their homes during these periods.

Is there a local need for a Children's Home?

It is acknowledged across the country that there are not enough suitable placements for children who need to live in residential settings. Furthermore, choice locally has become limited due to some of the barriers facing new providers setting up homes. This is now leading to the expansion of providers who are owned by Private Equity Houses or Venture Capitalists.

The Competition & Marketing Authority were commissioned to carry out a Market study and a full report was published in March 2022. The report identified that:

Overall, our view is that there are significant problems in how the placements market is functioning, particularly in England and Wales. We found that:

- *a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs*

- *the largest private providers of placements are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than we would expect if this market were functioning effectively*
- *some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating a risk that disorderly failure of highly leveraged firms could disrupt the placements of children in care*

First, and most importantly, it is clear that the placements market, particularly in England and Wales, is failing to provide a sufficient supply of the right type so that looked-after children can consistently access placements that properly meet their needs, when and where they require them. This means that some children are being placed in settings that are not appropriate for their own circumstances, for instance where they are:

- *far from where they would call ‘home’ without a clear child protection reason for this, thereby separated from positive friend and family networks: 37% of children in England in residential placements are placed at least 20 miles from their home base*
- *separated from siblings, where their care plan calls for them to be placed together: 13% of all siblings in care in England were placed separately, contrary to their care plan*
- *unable to access care, therapies or facilities that they need: we were told consistently by local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales that it is especially difficult to find placements for children with more complex needs and for older children. We were also told that some children are placed in an unregulated setting due to the lack of an appropriate children’s home place, and so cannot legally be given the care they need. We also understand that in some cases children are being placed in unregistered settings, notwithstanding the fact that this is illegal.*

Complaints

- As a provider we fully appreciate and respect the local and immediate neighbourhood. We encourage anyone with any concerns to be able to approach the home to speak with staff or management at any time. They should feel confident that any concerns or matters will be dealt with efficiently and in a timely manner. Anyone with a complaint should also feel that they can complain to the governing body; OFSTED. All complaints or concerns will receive acknowledgement that highlights what actions will be taken to remedy these concerns. Anyone wishing to make a complaint is welcomed to contact the home or the company’s head office for full details of the complaints procedure which can be provided in writing.

Planning Application

Rather than apply for a “Certificate of Lawfulness” Oasis Care Solutions Ltd has elected to submit a Full Planning Application in good faith that the application will be considered in the round and enable us to establish an excellent service, responsive to the needs of the host authority and give a chance for Lancashire children to maintain links within their home county until such time they are safely able to return to their families and own communities.